#10 BEMUSING MAGAZINE 10p

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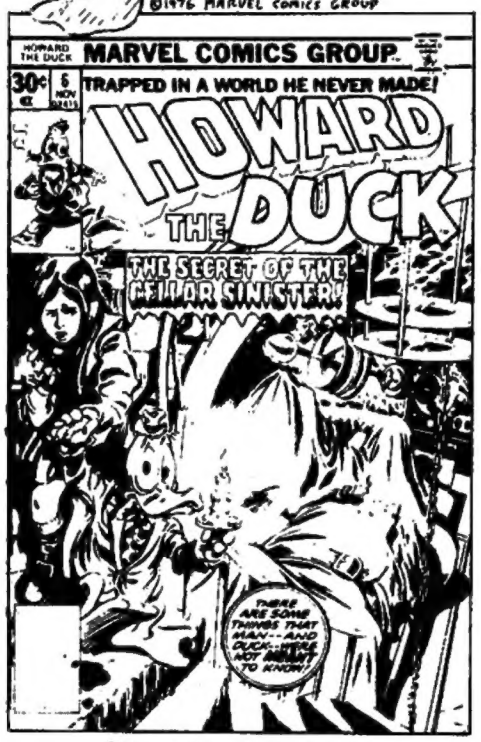
HOWARD THE DUCK
MARVEL COMICS GROUP
30¢
TRAPPED IN A WORLD HE NEVER MADE!
HOWARD THE DUCK
THE SECRET OF THE CELLAR SINISTER!
THERE ARE SOME THINGS THAT MAN--AND DUCK--WERE NOT MEANT TO KNOW!

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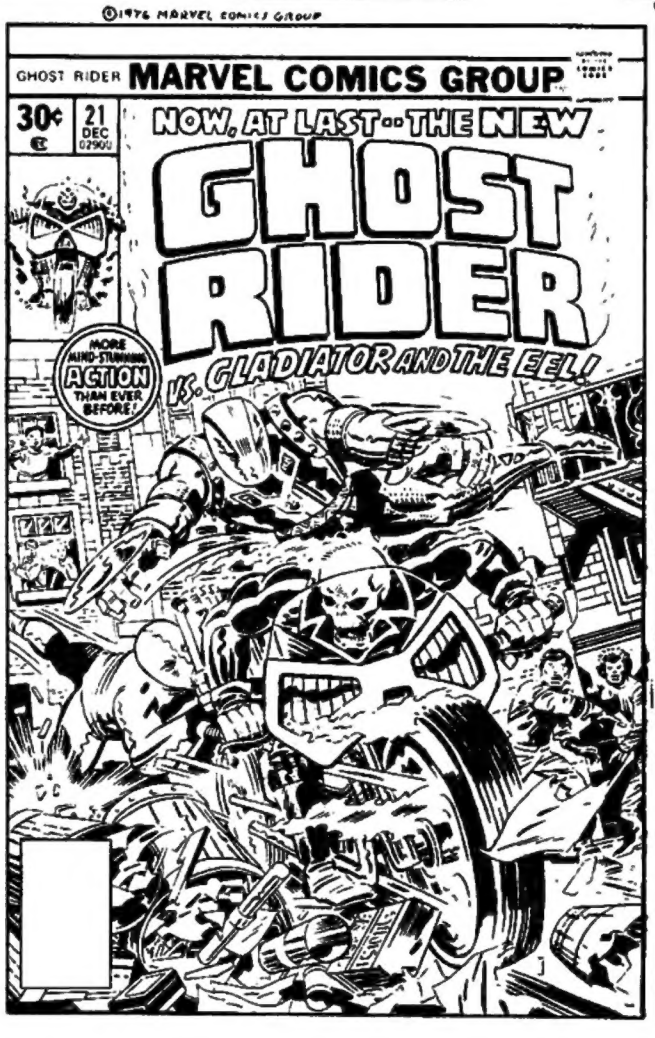

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THE COMIC REVIEW

with

COMICS NEWS

ARTWORK

REVIEWS & FEATURES

DISTRIBUTION NEWS

SPECIAL TENTH ISSUE!

BEMUSING MAGAZINE ≠10

AUGUST 1976

editor & publisher: Martin Lock

assistant editor: Nigel Edwards

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ART CREDITS: Philip Elliot: 7,15 Superswipe: 1
Chris Ash: 20 Andrew Hanson: 11 Mercy Van Vlack: 6, 17, 18 (pencils)
Greg Chown: 4 Wes Smith: 18 (inks)
Jack Straw: 9 Leslie Stannage: 2 Al Walker: 10

BEMUSING'S TENTH ISSUE STARTS HERE....

So, Bemusing Magazine reaches double figures; to celebrate this modest milestone, this issue's article tells how we got here. Nige Edwards, who loaned Jim Korock his "Bem" collection and, I gather, generally masterminded the idea of such a "history", tells me that Jim tried to write it in my style--I'm not sure whether or not that's a compliment, but turn to page 18 and find out!

But now, a warning--get ready to pay more for Bemusing. After having all the extra space to play with in Bem-9, 20 pages seems awfully constricting, this time. So, starting with issue 12, the cover price of Bemusing will rise to 15p--but, do not despair, the number of pages will go up too! The subscription rate will then become 5 issues for £1.00 --but, until Bem-12 comes out, there's still time to subscribe, or resubscribe, at the old 70p rate.

Enough; you've been given fair warning now, and a bigger Bem will certainly be worth the extra money, with more news, more columns, and features, and even an article or two. Bem-11 will be the last 10p issue, and will be slightly unlike the usual Bem in presentation, just as an experiment. For one thing, it will not contain the usual Review Section--and for another the title logo will be changed. Watch for it in November!

Much has been written about the next American Presidential Election; let us say that this magazine endorses the new, dynamic campaign against the two-party system being waged by the dedicated men of the All-Night Party. The campaign is being managed by Steve Gerber, and their Presidential Candidate is well-known to us all -- Mr Howard the Duck. Much can, and I'm sure will, be said about this fine fowl's credentials--so let us only say that we here at Bemusing Magazine, the fanzine that dares to be similar, wish Mr Duck all the luck in the world. Howard the Duck for President! America could do a lot worse--and probably will.

I'd like to end by thanking two people in particular for their extra-special help this time; Mr Cole of World Distributors, for supplying the up-to-date distribution information you'll find on page 6 (superceding some details given on page 7!), and Richard Burton, our friendly neighbourhood competitor, for the larger-size cover repros we're using this time. Thanks! -Martin

news

After a Jim Starlin fill-in issue, Gene Colan will again be the regular DR STRANGE artist. SON OF SATAN ends with either #7 or #8--he'll turn up in TOMB OF DRACULA soon. The Hannibal King-Blade storyline ends in ToD #53, and in #54 Dracula's child is born. Iron Man is to guest-star in an upcoming WEREWOLF BY NIGHT. A 5-page NICK FURY story by Scott Edelman & Juan Ortiz is planned, as is a SUNFIRE 5-pager by Roger Stern & Dave Wenzel. John Byrne is now regular artist on CHAMPIONS, while Joe Staton is to draw SONS OF THE TIGER (in Deadly Hands of Kung Fu) and a new Ape series--both men have left Charlton completely now.

New Marvel monthly books (see page six for scheduling details) are 2001 and THE PRISONER by Kirby, PETER PARKER THE SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN by Conway and Sal Buscema, LOGAN8S RUN by Conway, Perez & Janson, & MS MARVEL by Conway, John Buscema and Sinnott. BLACK PANTHER is by Kirby, and is a bi-monthly replacement for JUNGLE ACTION; RED SONJA is by Thomas & Thorne and MARVEL FEATURE will contain Captain America reprints--MARVEL DOUBLE FEATURE is cancelled!

Marvel's new black & white comic, RAMPAGING HULK, is by Moench, Simonson & Alcala; in the back is BLOODSTONE. Hulk is also due to appear in a 2-part MARVEL TEAM-UP story, along with Woodgod, drawn by John Byrne -- the following issue features Warlock.

The one completed Steve Englehart/Gil Kane issue of PRISONER is shelved, as it's rather different from Jack Kirby's version. Paul Gulacy is leaving MASTER OF KUNG FU. Val Mayerik is pencilling a Hercules backup for the THOR black & white, while in the front Len Wein & Jim Starlin bring us Thor & the Warriors III versus Genghis Khan.

Nova battles Thor in NOVA #4, faces Tyrannus in #5, & will appear in a DAREDEVIL issue soon. The Red Skull's due in SUPER-VILLAIN TEAM-UP shortly; a new super-heroine called SPITFIRE debuts in INVADERS #12; ADVENTURES ON THE PLANET OF THE APES ends with #11, not #10.

BLACKHAWK ends with #250, PLOP with #24, and FOUR STAR SPECTACULAR with #6. OUR ARMY AT WAR becomes SGT ROCK with #302, STAR SPANGLED WAR becomes UNKNOWN SOLDIER with #205, and WEIRD WESTERN becomes JONAH HEX as of #39. FLASH has gone monthly; DEADMAN will guest-star in BRAVE & BOLD soon; the SUPERBOY issue of DC SUPER STARS will be drawn by Curt Swan and, brought back specially, Murphy Anderson.

After an ENEMY ACE (reprint) issue for DC SPECIAL, von Hammer and Mlle Marie are planned to alternate as back-up features in UNKNOWN SOLDIER, which is now story-edited by Tony Isabella, as is SUPER-TEAM FAMILY, which will contain new CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN stories and DOOM PATROL reprints.

The Sergio Aragones work left unpublished by the end of PLOP will go into an all-Aragones issue of DC SUPER STARS; the STRANGE SPORTS issue of this title features a baseball game between Kid Flash, Superman, Uncle Sam, Batman, Wonder Woman, Green Arrow, Robin, Black Canary, and Plastic Man vs Chronos, Huntress, Sportsmaster, Dr Polaris, Luthor, Amazo, the Joker, Weather Wizard, Felix Faust, the Tattooed Man, and Matter Master. Good grief!

Joe Staton is the permanent METAL MEN artist, from #50. The Shining Knight will soon reappear in ALL STAR COMICS; Marty Pasko is now permanent SUPERMAN scripter.

PAGE 4 FUNNIES

CHRIS ASH PRESENTS:

THE MIGHTY AVENGERS in 'DEATH BY DOUBLE OR QUITS!'

OKAY, GET READY TO LAUGH!
CAP, ALL THE OTHER AVENGERS HAVE BEEN WIPED OUT BY DARTMAN! YOU'RE THE NEXT ON HIS LIST!
WHAT ARE YOU GONNA DO?!
3 HOURS LATER
OF COURSE RICK! IT'S SO OBVIOUS! I KNOW HOW TO MEET THE CHALLENGE OF DARTMAN!
AND SO CAP STAYS UP ALL NIGHT, REDESIGNING HIS SHIELD!
NEXT MORNING
DON'T BE AFRAID TO SAY WHAT YOU THINK RICK!
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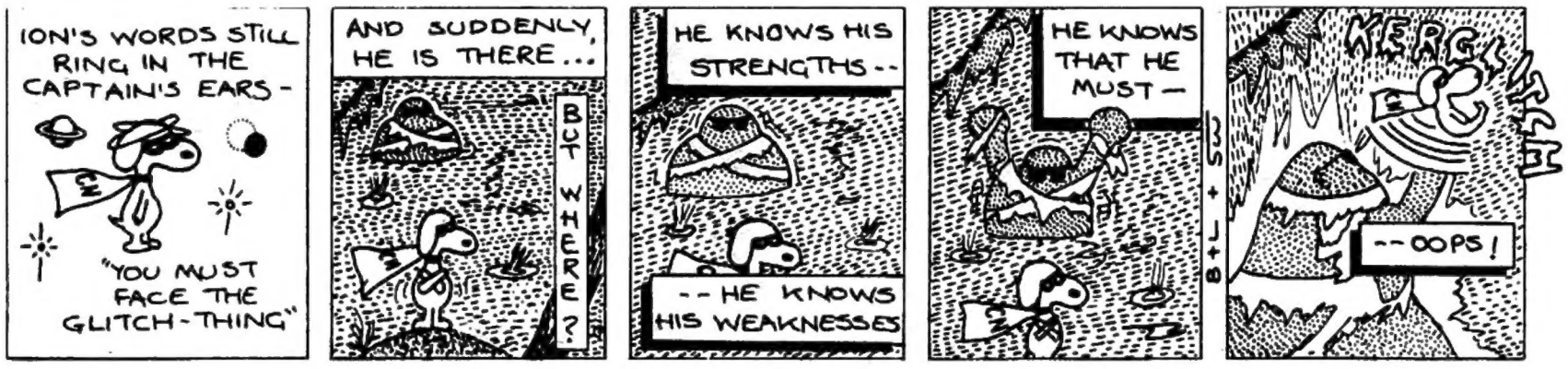
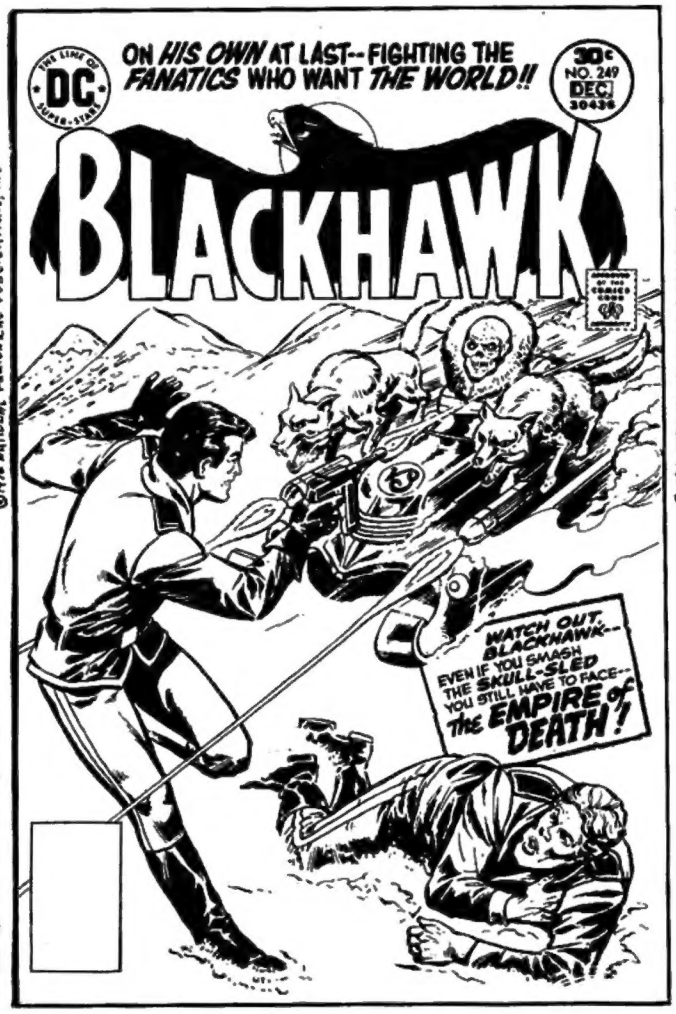
CHARACTERS © 1976 MARVEL COMICS GROUP

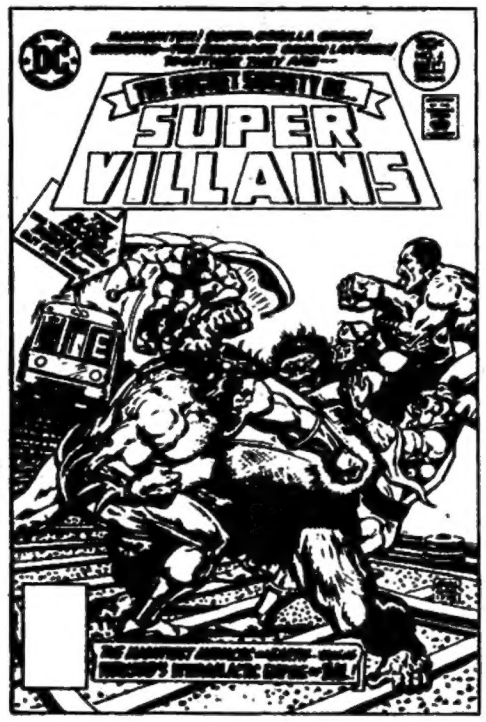
MIGHTY MAN — BY L. STANNAGE

CAPTAIN NUTS — by B.L. Schwipe


ION'S WORDS STILL RING IN THE CAPTAIN'S EARS -
"YOU MUST FACE THE GLITCH-THING"
AND SUDDENLY, HE IS THERE...
BUT WHERE?
HE KNOWS HIS STRENGTHS --
-- HE KNOWS HIS WEAKNESSES
HE KNOWS THAT HE MUST —
B+L
KERG
--OOPS!

REG USPATOFF


ON HIS OWN AT LAST--FIGHTING THE FANATICS WHO WANT THE WORLD!!
DC
30¢ NO. 249 DEC 30436
BLACKHAWK
WATCH OUT, BLACKHAWK--EVEN IF YOU SMASH THE SKULL-SLED YOU STILL HAVE TO FACE--THE EMPIRE of DEATH!



Strangest news-rumour of the summer has to be the new one from DC -- apparently, a number of titles (Superman, World's Finest, & Superman Family) may be put into the ⌀1.00 oversize, with around 56 pages, all new material, and ads. Since the Batman group got clobbered in the 60c 100-page format, I suppose DC felt that the Superman books should suffer in turn! And, talking of oversize books, what's your reaction to the thought of Julius Schwartz, Denny O'Neil, & Joe Kubert concocting a ⌀2.00 "Superman vs Muhammad Ali"? My response just isn't printable, I'm sorry to say.

Marvel are doing something pretty unusual, too, these days--increasing the number of books they publish monthly, not only by putting up the more successful bimonthlies to a 12-a-year schedule (Champions, Howard), but also by the just about unprecedented way of starting new, untried books as monthlies. Eternals started the fashion, but by the time you add Logan's Run, Peter Parker, 2001, Prisoner, Star Wars, and even Ms Marvel, you find that during 1976 Marvel will have doubled the number of monthly 36-pagers they put out. No bi-monthly book is safe now -- if it doesn't do well enough to go up to 12 a year, it must be very vulnerable, as every new monthly book means that two bi-monthlies have to be scrapped!

Following the Oz and Superman/Spider-Man DC & Marvel collaborations, there is talk of more such affairs, perhaps on an annual basis. The trouble is that the publishers are not able to agree on who should meet whom; Stan Lee wants Captain America to meet the Batman, but Jenette Kahn's choice of DC star is Wonder Woman. That's the situation at the moment!

Charlton, one-time "third force" in comics, seem in bad shape now. They've lost Joe Staton, John Byrne, and, as they're refusing to return artwork, Neal Adams & Continuity Associates--the SPACE: 1999 books are ending with ≠6 (30c) and ≠8 (⌀1.00). It doesn't leave much... -RU

BRITISH NEWS

On the British front, mention should be made of a new Marvel weekly due this autumn--CAPTAIN BRITAIN is the name of the book, and, before one gets to the usual reprints, there's a new feature specially written (by Chris Claremont) & drawn (by Herb Trimpe & Fred Kida) for the UK, starring a character called, of course, Captain Britain. There's even a possibility that his adventures may be in colour! TITANS is to be discontinued soon, as it's using up material just too quickly.

"ALY SLOPER" is to be a British magazine, edited by Denis Gifford and published by Alan Class, featuring a number of strips, mainly "funnies" but also including in ≠1 (due out in time for Comicon '76) some of the last work completed by the late Frank Bellamy. -ML

RICH MORRISSEY'S AMERICA

Well, I'm afraid some of the rumours about DC's increasing use of the all-new 48-page format have been exaggerated. As it stands now, JUSTICE LEAGUE will be the only title in that format (even PLOP has done just that in sales, and has been taken off the schedule) but there is talk of expanding ALL-STAR, WONDER WOMAN, and, yes, SUPER-TEAM FAMILY to that size if it goes over well. In the meantime, WW has gone monthly (and JLA will remain so) -- there was talk of remolding the WW comic in the TV mold (at last report, ABC <u>has</u> picked her up as a regular series -- but only as 11 episodes to appear irregularly during the fall season), but Julie Schwartz is dead set against it, remembering only too well his experiences with BATMAN. That, perhaps, is why the SHAZAM comic was transferred to Joe Orlando -- but, for the present, it looks as if Julie and WW will go their own way and not be influenced by Lynda Carter's version too directly.

I said JLA would be the only all-new 48-page comic, but perhaps that isn't quite true. YOUNG LOVE may also take that format -- it will soon feature all-new material, which editor Tony Isabella says may not have to be Code-approved! There'll be at least one funny story in each issue, as well as stories dealing with topics like prostitution and rape -- pretty strong stuff. The title just might be worth buying now, even for male fans!

After brief arguments, both Steve Gerber and Jim Starlin are back in the Marvel fold once more. HOWARD THE DUCK is a huge success; it's going monthly, but, according to Steve, each story will still be for the most part complete in one issue--though they'll be tied together with threads of continuity, such as Howard's forthcoming race for the presidency. Howard, by the way, had his own campaign headquarters in Steve Gerber's room--or one of them--at the McAlpin Hotel, where Phil Seuling's Julycon was held. The hotel also housed another Presidential candidate, Governor Jerry Brown of California--but he had even less chance of success. In fact, Marvel is said now to be considering <u>more</u> serious funny animal books, with titles like MIDAS THE MOUSE, but I just can't believe <u>that</u>! I haven't heard anything so ridiculous since--uh--SUPERMAN vs. MUHAMMAD ALI...

Well, that's enough for now. -RHM

DISTRIBUTION -- MARVEL COMICS FROM OCTOBER TO MARCH compiled by Ruan Lanihorne

From October, World Distributors are stopping their current system of distributing the bi-monthly titles a fortnight after the monthlies--and, looking at this listing (an arrow means that particular book will come over from that month on), it's easy to see why. All Marvel's new monthly titles mean that, by February, there will be 22 monthly books and, since World are keeping to 25 titles a month, only 3 bi-monthlies. In December there may be a 26th title, as World are trying to reinstate FANTASTIC FOUR to the list as soon as possible. The October list gives the titles that are known to have been shipped from America--as the "shipping list" only has 22 titles, the last three are only my guesses. The lists from November on are not definite, but only suggestions at present and subject to change if, for example, a title is delayed--however, it looks very much as if we are going to lose such titles as Marvel Spotlight, X-Men, Super-Villain Team-Up, Marvel Premiere, Red Sonja, Ghost Rider, and Werewolf by Night. But if we are limited to 25 titles a month, it's certainly an interesting 25! -RL

OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER	JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH
Daredevil →	Howard the Duck →	2001 →	Logan's Run →	Prisoner →	
Invaders →	Avengers →	Peter Parker →	Ms Marvel →		
Marvel Two-In-One →	Skull	FF (?) →	Red Sonja	Dr Strange	Omega
Captain America →	Tomb of Darkness	Champions →	Omega	Inhumans	Black Panther
Thor →	M Triple Action	S-V Team-Up	Black Panther	M Presents	Cap Marvel
Master of Kung Fu →	Marvel Feature	Kull	Cap Marvel		
Eternals →	Chamber of Chills	Dr Strange			
Power Man →	Black Goliath	M Spotlight			
Conan →	Omega	Inhumans			
Defenders →	Captain Marvel	M Presents			
Nova →	Amazing Adventures	M Premiere			
Marvel Team-Up →	Werewolf by Night				
Iron Man →					
Ka-Zar					
Marvel Spotlight					
X-Men					
Inhumans					
Fantastic Four					
Champions					
S-V Team-Up					
Marvel Premiere					
Dr Strange					
? Marvel Presents					
? Warlock					
? Ghost Rider					

FAN-THINGS

THE REGULAR COLUMN OF FANZINE REVIEWS AND FAN NEWS -- BY ED SALLIS

Normally reliable sources (well, actually it was Nige Edwards) inform me that one of the "top ten" fanzines in the UK is soon to fold; THING, the long-running adzine edited by Doug Gifford, will end with #28. It's sad to lose it, with its comprehensive ad section, review service, and emphasis on British comics -- but as #22 is the current issue 25p by post from Douglas Gifford.

we've got a year or so left, so make the most of it while you can.

An up-and-coming fanzine which could well join the top rank of regular British fanzines is COMICS PLUS. If number 3 isn't out in time for Comicon '76, it'll be along in September-- it's to be a full 100 pages long, the same size as last year's Fantasy Unlimited Annual but all-new 65p from Alan Matheson.

-- but #2 will certainly do to be going on with. Artists include Alan Hunter, Andy Johnson, Greg Chown, Laurence Piper, and even Superswipe, while regular reviewers include Martin Lock (proper reviews, not tale-enders--the only fanzine he does 'em for!) and Nige Edwards. Jack Straw too lets fly with "News of the Weird", with that peculiar Scavengers Mob brand of humour, and there are pretty good articles too... All in all, a good, well laid out magazine--for a second issue, fantastic. Keep it up, Al!

After Comicon '76, it's back to normal for the Comic Mart operation--well, almost. I find to my surprise that there's to be an admission charge of 10p, which organiser Nick Landau is hoping will discourage some of the younger thieves, and also help pay the hall rent. The location? The same as Comicon '76 (and '75), that's the Regent Centre Hotel, up near Great Portland Street station. The dates? October 3, November 28, and January 16. And don't forget that those aren't Saturdays, they're SUNDAYS! It's a nice freesheet for the Marts, by the way, depicting two youngsters looking shocked about the admission charge, and a grasping dealer beckoning them to his table.

I mentioned last time the comics shops in London I consider worth visiting. Dark They Were & Golden Eyed (10, Berwick Street, W1) for a vast range of stock; Reedmore Books (Seven Dials stall, Earlham St, WC2, and 1, Midland Cres NW3) for generally cheaper new imports, a good selection of back issues, and British Marvels, etc; Compendium in Camden for books on comics, and the slicker US fanzines; and Martin's Bookshop, which has moved from Rugby St to, so Rob Barrow tells me, Victoria Station. It's on the westbound platform of the District line, so if you go by tube you don't have to leave the station! Rob himself has a stall on Saturdays, selling cheap imports and other comics, at Camden Lock market. But let's not forget Frank Dobson's Weird Fantasy Bookshop (3, Lewisham Way, New Cross, SE14), often first with the new DCs and with a good stock of old comics, and, on Saturdays, visit the Fantasy Unlimited organisation, on the 1st floor of 397, Mare Street, Hackney E8 -- it's mainly mail-order, of course, but if you know what you want, one of the "trained tapirs" will help you find it. And, as my revenge for the illo on this page (honest, I don't look at all like Ted Sallis), let me reveal that it was Maniacal Martin Lock who invented that particular cognomen. Trained Tapir! Blah!

But, as we're as pressed for space as ever (sharing page 9 with Straw & Edwards? Double blah!), on to another fanzine review; one of the main half-dozen regular zines, in fact-- FANTASY TRADER #22 16½p from Mike Cruden.

Inside is an intelligent commentary on the Kirby 4th World books by Pete Scott, news, ads including Mike's own comprehensive list, nice art, and the proverbial "bumper lettercol". I always enjoy a new FT, and #22 was a good 'un.

It's difficult to review a single issue of either COMIC MEDIA NEWS 27p from Rich Burton, or COMICS UNLIMITED 30p from Alan Austin.

CMN is always full-to-bursting with the latest comics news, with if space allows a few reviews and other features; CU has a more "fannish" atmosphere, with news, reviews, letters, regular features and articles. With #38 (August), CU reverts to stencil printing -- but otherwise it's the mix as before, with a Fafhrd & Gray Mouser article --and let's not forget the CU sales list, the biggest selection of comics for sale around!

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PUT ME DOWN, YA SILVER CREEP!
QUIET, DUCK! WE'VE GOT TO GET THERE BEFORE THE RUSH STARTS!
DARK THEY WERE & GOLDEN-EYED.
10, BERWICK STREET, LONDON W1V 3RG
01-734-4260
BRITAIN'S LONGEST ESTABLISHED RETAIL COMIC SHOP!
OVER 50,000 COMICS ALWAYS IN STOCK!
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CHARACTERS ©1974 MARVEL COMICS GROUP

After almost a year, COMIXINE vol 2 no.2 is finally due--as he warned us, Marc Baines had to take the time off to concentrate on the dreaded examinations. This time, there's more emphasis on articles, while free inside is the first issue of yet another Counter-Earth zine --INCREDIBLE GARBAGE, with The Emlock Review, News And Reviews by Marc, and even a cover by Superswipe featuring Stan Lee himself! Comixine ≠2 will be out for Comicon '76, or buy it by post from Marc Baines for 15p.

This page is being assembled rather later than page 7--so I can now reveal that Reedmore Books have a new branch selling comics -- it's at 690, Holloway Road, Holloway, N19, which has to be good news for fans in that area.

But now, let's go international. I reviewed Comics Land ≠1 in Bem-7, now here comes THE CL PORTFOLIO £3.00, from Nino Bernazzali.

--28 big (9½" x 13½") pages, showcasing the stunning art of Victor De La Fuente. It's not cheap -- but it's worth it, a very handsome publication.

A well-known newszine editor and gossip who happened to be present at the time wants me to mention "a dashing young pair of ex-Powerman artists" who "were seen dancing so divinely together at Trev & Gil Goring's wedding reception" --interesting, eh? He also reminded me about the mystery of Dez Skinn's "broken leg" that turned out to be a sprained ankle. You see, Dez doesn't know the French for a sprained ankle!

Talking of Dashing Desmond, his replacement as editor of F/A, Colin Campbell, is set to publish FANTASY ADVERTISER ≠ 60 in time for the Con 30p from Colin

-- he's one chap who'll publish F/A on time! The publication date of Dez's last issue, ≠59, is less certain...

And remember, if there's still time before 21st & 22nd August--come to Comicon '76! -EMS

HYPEY MARBLE CHECKLIST

MASTER OF KUNG FU ≠47: Shang Chi is kidnapped by a bunch of thugs in a story by Colonel Sanders & Paul Gulacy, called "Another Chinese Take-Away!"

FANTASTIC FOUR TH
TAKE THAT, YOU PAGE BORDER!
OWW!
HELP! THERE'S TOO MUCH ARSON ABOUT!
THIS ISSUE! THE TORCH BECOMES A FIRE HAZARD AND THE INVISIBLE GIRL DROPS OUT OF SIGHT!
WOBBLE
EEK!
- JACKTASTIC STRAW

ARTIST TEAM-UP ≠3: This issue Rich Buckler, Keith Pollard & Arvell Jones get together to see who can imitate, swipe and rip off Jack Kirby the best--or worst, as the case may be.

HYPEY MARBLE CHECKLIST ≠1: by Nige Edwards & Jack Straw.

SUPER STRAW STORIES ≠2: This issue, Jack Straw is in a pub, and gets in 72 pints of lager in a story called "But I Was Only Obeying Last Orders!"

FANTASTIC FOUR ≠181: A join-the-dots fanatic pursues the Invisible Girl, in "Has Anyone Around Here Seen the Invisible Girl?" by David McCallum.

HOSTESS TWINKIES ≠1: Yes, in their own great comic at last, those lovable cakes save the whole world from destruction!

POWER MAN ≠41: Luke Cage, on a case, breaks up an illegal PTA meeting with the words "Shoot, You Mothers!" by Henry Sandwich and Spam Roll.

JUNGLE ACTION ≠24: The Black Panther stars in a deeply moral and philosophical tale, by Don McGregor, called "The Bronx is Utopia and Broadway is a Giant Fortune Cookie, How About That For Being Symbolic??"

RED SONJA ≠7: The She-Devil is faced with either joining the communist party, or being put against a wall and shot! In "Better Red Than Sonja!" by Karl Marx, and his brothers Groucho, Chico and Harpo.

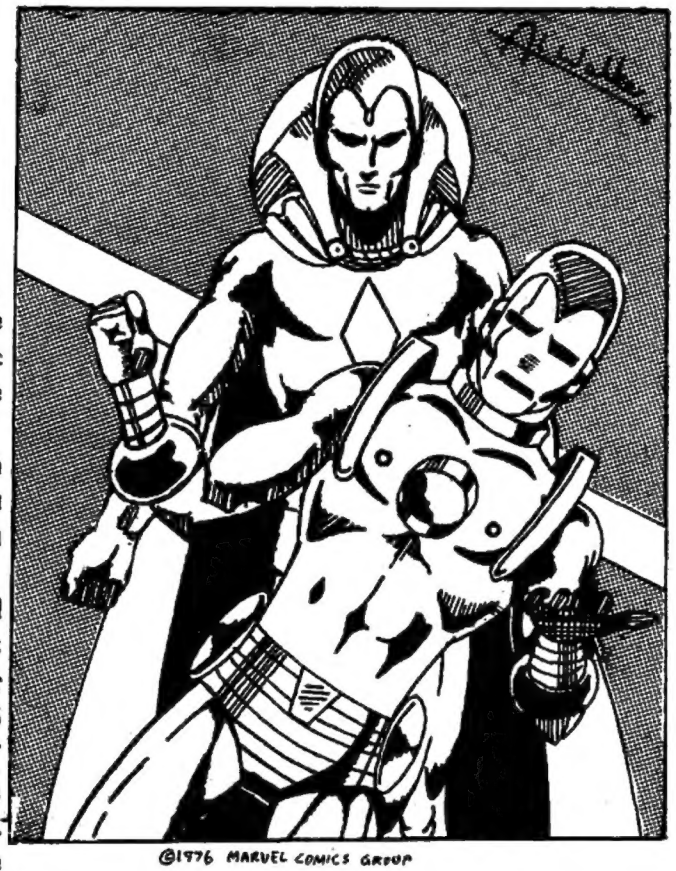
HOWARD THE DUCK ≠7: It's duck hunting season and Howard gets hounded by a bald-headed baby-talking hunter in "You Dwatted Duck, I'll Ewadicate You!" by Mel Blanc and Carl Barks.

MARVEL ALL-COMMIE COMICS
RED SONJA
SHE DEVILSKY WITH A SWORD
J. STRAWSKY
JA, COMRADE AND RIGHT UP THE WORKERS!
WOBBLE WOBBLE
HORRIBLE STAR
RED SONJA BATTLES THE BOURGEOIS CAPITALISTS FOR THE GLORIOUS PEOPLES REPUBLIC!

MARVEL REPRINT RIP-OFF ≠379: A reprint of last month's FF epic, "Another Fast Buck", by Svengali.

MARVEL SWINDLE ≠97: A reprint of last month's Spider-Man epic "Suckered by a New Cover!"

EMLOCK TALE-ENDERS



Look; here is ISIS ≠1. It really isn't that much fun. The girl is quite good-looking, sure--but candidly, the story's poor. And one thing I consider worse, her magic all is spoken verse. I ask you, who would have the time to speak all her commands in rhyme?

And next, here's the new METAL MEN--it's surely worth ten out of...oh, twelve or something like that. If you think I'm going to do this whole column in doggerel, you can think again! The issue of Metal Men to hand is ≠48, November, plotted and drawn by Walt Simonson, & scripted by Martin Pasko. Eclipso, a villain I can never take at all seriously, is back -- and that's about all. Whatever happened to the subplots, the characterisation? HERCULES UNBOUND ≠7 has also got the post-Gerry Conway lack of direction, with what Joe Orlando is pleased to call "an off-beat action epic", by David Michelinie, Simonson, & Wally Wood. It's a good job they put Walt's name on the credits, otherwise only an occasional sound-effect shows his influence! KAMANDI ≠46 is the last Conway-edited issue too, by the way--and the art, by Keith Giffen & Jack Abel, has come out of Kirby's influence.

STARFIRE ≠2 is a better heroine effort than the "DC TV Comic" Isis, but then, Michelinie, Vosburg & Colletta are a good team, and "The Siege of Lortnan Manor" is a fable of loyalty and cowardice, bravery and sacrifice -- and a deadly mistake. If the next scripter, Elliot Maggin, can keep up this standard, Starfire is going to be a book to watch.

But, on to Marvel. And where better to start than SPIDEY SUPER STORIES ≠19, with not only the return of Doc Doom, but the Silver Surfer too? And it's Easy To Read, as well! But if you have a sensitive stomach, hurry on to a real comic, such as SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN ≠14 (Sept). "Shadows in Zamboula" is the 39-page lead story, by (at last!) Roy Thomas, Mr Neal Adams, and the Tribe. Not pure Neal Adams, in the end; some pages were only layouts when the deadlines loomed again. But pretty nice...

MARVEL TWO-IN-ONE ≠20 contains the last part of the story begun in the FF annual and running on into the 2-in-1 annual, with the Liberty Legion--Roy Thomas wrote it, and Sal Buscema & Sam Grainger drew it. If you haven't bought at least the second annual, you'll be a bit lost.

X-Men ≠101 has a grim start. "Welcome to the last minutes of a young woman's life." But is all lost? Check it out, and see! But how about POWER MAN ≠36? It's a reprint of ≠12, though, of course, the cover doesn't tell you that. A good story, though, if you haven't got that particular issue...

CONAN ≠67 manages to continue the stories from both Conan ≠66 and Marvel Feature ≠6--in other words, Red Sonja is back! The adventure continues in MF ≠7, and is then to conclude in Conan ≠68, also billed as "Conan vs King Kull" --just as long as Spider-Man doesn't appear!

But, let's look at some October Marvel comics that don't come over at 10p. MARVEL CHILLERS ≠7, starring Tigra, with Red Wolf and Super Skrull also on hand, is a final issue -- Tuska & Trapani provide fair-enough art, while the script's by Jim Shooter. KA-ZAR ≠18 is the last issue but one; luckily, the current story is due to conclude then. Nice work by Moench and Mayerik -- why didn't it sell? FANTASTIC FOUR ≠175 is the first not to come over for a while -- and the conclusion of the Galactus vs High Evolutionary story. Be warned, not everybody is what they look like...and be prepared for the most-requested change in physique of '76! HULK ≠204 is plotted/pencilled by Herb Trimpe, with Wein & Staton also along. Ol' Greenskin's origin is retold--sort of! SON OF SATAN ≠6 is by John Warner, Ed Hannigan & Sonny Trinidad, and is an average issue; TOMB OF DRACULA ≠49 is by Marv, Gene & Tom of course, and has 18 pages of story--but next time, the one & only Silver Surfer guest-stars! DAREDEVIL ANNUAL ≠4 is by Wolfman, Claremont, Tuska & Chiaramonte, with the Black Panther and Sub-Mariner involved too, while HULK ANNUAL ≠5, by Claremont, Sal Buscema, & Abel, guest-stars 6 of the reprint book monsters. Hulky polishes one of 'em off every four pages or so...

And, finally, SPIDER-MAN ≠161, by Len Wein, Ross Andru, & Mike Esposito, tells us "...And the Nightcrawler Came Prowling, Prowling..."

NOVA #1 (September)
by Marv Wolfman, John Buscema & Joe Sinnott

This, if Marv Wolfman was still in charge, would have been the new style of Marvel Comics; an attempt at the "old Marvel style". I don't know about the old Marvel style, but the origin is definitely reminiscent of the second Green Lantern and the original Captain Marvel. Bil... sorry, Richard Ryder gets his powers from a dying spaceman; the only problem is that, while CM had that magic word that transmogrified him every issue, RR has nothing, except the line "it could have been you if you were sitting where Richard was". That's fine for a first issue, but how, without some magic word, are you going to keep that feeling alive?

The boy, as you can see, continues the old superhero tradition of having an alliterative name (at least they've used a good christian name). The setting is a high school; here Marv Wolfman takes advantage of hindsight, introducing a strong supporting cast right from the start, with, needless to say, a local bully. Although the boy is no bespectacled weakling, he is, to use his own words, "a terminal fall guy". All in all, it's not such a bad story, with good art. It is not surprising to find that the comic-book father of this new/old style superhero bears a strong resemblance to the father of the entire Marvel line. -R. Ashford

"FALLIN' NOVA" by K. Williams

This is the sort of magazine that can give reviewers nightmares. A masterpiece it's not... a fiasco it's not... and easy to review it's not, either... How about if I give a selection of the reviews I started to write, and then changed my mind about? For instance:-

"Yes, but do we <u>need</u> a new Spider-Man?" Now, that was succinct and to the point, maybe, but not really informative. So then I thought:-

"A beautifully-crafted prduct; my compliments to the factory." But that was not only unsubtle, but probably unjustified. So, let's try and be a bit more specific: what are the actual basic elements of the thing?-

"An interesting melange of influences this. We start off with 'Space' (as in: 'The final frontier...') and 'Log Data'; then we switch to Earth, and focus on a rather puny youth who is being constantly harassed by bullies, which reminded me of the early Peter Parker; then we go back to Space to be introduced to (the 1st) Nova, who is it seems the last survivor of a destroyed world, like this year's Omega. What else? Well, this Nova wants to pass on his power (and his mission) to a successor before he dies, so he sends out a beam of (green!) energy towards Earth, where it finally strikes the aforementioned puny youth, Richard Rider. Pure coincidence, of course, but didn't Green Lantern start out that way? I'm sure that <u>all</u> the apparent swipes, er, sorry, influences at work here, such as Spidey, Omega, Supes, Star Trek, Starlord, Captain Comet, and of course Spidey, are in fact pure coincidence. I just think it's unfortunate that Marv should have needed to have recourse to so much coincidence."

Well, not only is that too long for a review anyway, but it's probably a trifle over-sarky. And also it seems to me that one thing that hasn't come across is that I actually <u>enjoyed</u> the thing -- although I don't <u>approve</u> of it.

It's a creation of the sixties; Marv's explanation of its origins admits as much. While the nostalgia-lover in me is drawn to the simplicity of it, and the sense of straightforward fun it achieves, the critic in me says you can't live in the past. Nova is too...irrelevant? Middle-class? Divorced from reality? No, that may all be true, but it's really too simplistic. I did enjoy it, I enjoyed it a lot, but looking back I felt there was really nothing there.

Hmm, you know, that last bit might not be too bad for a review...

One final point: will it be a success? Well, I'm no clairvoyant, but my own reaction to a mag that starts monthly is, phooey to that! All the really good mags on the market started as bi-monthlies; you have to earn your 'wings'. So I shan't be actively wishing it success. On the other hand, I shan't be actively wishing it failure... Who says this isn't the Marvel Age of fence-straddling reviews?

This magazine may be easy to read, but it's a bloody nightmare to review... Nuff said? -KW

STARFIRE ≠1 (September)
"A World Made Of War" by David Michelinie, Mike Vosburg & Bob Smith

At last! A DC magazine devoted to a female, a sword-slinging one at that. But, by no means get the impression that Starfire is a revenge-crazed nutter. No, for, according to the world of the future as Michelinie writes, when war broke out, both sides looked toward alien help -- and the two alien races joined forces to conquer the Earth. Humans became slaves, and then Starfire is rescued by Dagan, a young rebel who attempts to teach her the ways of freedom. While she's away hunting, however, Dagan's camp is raided; she tracks the raiders back to the castle, and finds Dagan, almost dead, in a dungeon. He passes her the torch of liberty -- and dies. In a rage, she frees the other prisoners, and the rebellion starts.

The book has some very nice touches, such as Starfire constantly calling Dagan 'Master', and while the dialogue is one-person, it is played on in the Chris Claremont-Iron Fist style. In fact, I enjoyed this long-awaited female gem immensely, from start to finish. Although Mike Vosburg's art is nothing to shout about, the story flows well, mainly because of the art team's rendering of Starfire, which is both compassionate and impressive. All in all one heck of a good try; perhaps the book will degenerate into the old "revenge-crazed" theme but I don't think so. As long as Michelinie, Vosburg & Smith keep the book, DC have got an original on their hands. -Jan Garczynski

GREEN LANTERN ≠90 (September)
"Those Who Worship Evil's Might" by Denny O'Neil and Mike Grell

First the bad news: GL/GA is back, but it's now a non-'relevant' space-opera... Now the good news: GL/GA is back, and it's a bloody <u>good</u> space opera... Gardner Fox lives! (And that, in case you hadn't realised it, is a compliment). I don't think I need add that the Mike Grell art is beautiful, need I? -KW

ALL STAR COMICS ≠62 (October)
"When Fall The Mighty" by Gerry Conway, Paul Levitz, Keith Giffen & Wally Wood

The latest issue of one of my favourite titles, more so now that Conway's reintroduced the Golden Age Superman, and we have an explanation about Power Girl's comparative youth. It's quite refreshing to see those 2-dimensional heroes from the 1940s with characterisation... it's the same sort of feeling you got with the early revolutionary issues of Lee & Kirby's FF. I endorse Bob Rodi's comments in the letter column; the JSA is here to stay, let's face it they've never been away! -Allan J. Palmer

SPIDER-MAN ANNUAL ≠10 (1976)
"Step Into My Parlour..." by Wein, Mantlo, Kane, Giacoia and Esposito

Our sneaky editor knows how to get a glowing review out of me; he sends me this to review, with Gil Kane art. How could I not like it?

After Ditko, Kane is the only artist who can do Spidey justice, despite here having Mike Esposito screw up a few panels. Lee lookalike Mantlo rehashes Spidey ≠20, but he does it well -- if you want what some refer to as "an old-style Marvel", you'd do well to pick this up. Old-timers can also have fun seeing what other old Spideys Bill slightly swiped from. Amazing what uses a comic has, eh? -NPE

PLANET OF THE APES ≠23 (August)
"Messiah of Monkey Demons" by Moench & Sutton; Battle for the PotA part I: "The Weapons Shop of Paradise" by Moench, Alcazar & Trinidad

The television series may not have been too popular, but Marvel's adaptations seem to be, apparently even more so in the UK, and this issue shows why. Doug Moench's handling of the "Terror on the PotA" series maintains its high standard and Sutton's art is very striking. However, I must say that Alcazar & Trinidad's work on the first chapter of "Battle" is the best to be seen in PotA so far; excellent. -AJP

MASTER OF KUNG FU ≠44 (September)
"Prelude: Golden Daggers (A Death Run)" by Doug Moench, Paul Gulacy & Jack Abel

A grossly under-rated book this, but a consistently brilliant one. It would be too much to ask me to condense the story into a few words, all I can do is suggest you pick up a copy of this beautiful book. Truly Paul Gulacy has established himself in a category of his own, for his fluid artwork is the only to do Shang-Chi justice. This time around, Fu Manchu returns once more to plague his son, as Moench uses his cinematic use of story, with Gulacy art, to bring us the best Marvel package of the month. -Jan Garczynski

CONAN THE BARBARIAN ANNUAL ≠2 (1976)
"The Phoenix on the Sword" by Roy Thomas, Vicente Alcazar, & Yong Montano

Behind a lousy cover, which looks as if it was drawn in a coffee break, you'll find one of the best Conan tales outside Savage Sword. If you liked Kull ≠11, you'll enjoy this, as both were based on the same story by REH. The art is Buscema-ish (?) but I'd have preferred to see Alcazar ink his own pencils to give it that mythic quality he did on Thongor. So, it's not without faults, and it's an import, but it's still worth getting. -Nige Edwards

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FROM: FANTASY UNLIMITED.

MARVEL TREASURY SPECIAL ≠1 (1976)
"Caotain America's Bicentennial Battles" by Kirby, Trimpe, Romita & Smith $1.50/75p

84 giant pages of new Kirby work--with pages 3 to 13 inked by Barry Smith, no less. Okay, it is very, very super-patriotic, but that is what Captain America is all about, consequently this presentation does bring the Englehart and Kirby versions of CA closer together. Buy this and enjoy it; it certainly looks as if Kirby enjoyed producing it! -Allan J. Palmer

SECRET SOCIETY OF SUPER-VILLAINS ≠2 (August)
"No Man Shall I Call Master" by Conway, Kraft, Marcos & Robert Smith

An intriguing story from Conway and Kraft, and splendid art from Marcos and Smith as the SSoSV saga continues with Darkseid's patronage being revealed, the Manhunter clone playing an important part, and the return of Captain Comet -- star of Strange Adventures in the 1950s. This title's got a lot going for it. -AJP

BRAVE AND THE BOLD ≠128 (July)
Batman & Mister Miracle in "Death by the Ounce" by Bob Haney & Jim Aparo

It's Mystery Movie time again folks--and the mystery is, just what has Haney done to Mister Miracle, who returns as the Batman's partner? It's an adequate story, but it's not my idea of the original Super Escape Artist; and Jim Aparo doesn't seem capable of drawing Big Barda like the 'King'. -Allan J. Palmer

TARZAN FAMILY ≠65 (October)
Korak in "Deadlier Than the Male" by Bob Kanigher, James Sherman and Bob Smith, plus John Carter and Carson of Venus reprints.

I have some good news and some bad news. The good first? Okay. From next issue, this mag goes all new, with the return of John Carter & Pellucidar, plus a new artist/writer team for Korak. After being so boring for so long, it's at last on the road to improvement. The bad news? Issue 66 will be the last issue, as the new ERB Inc group takes over the Burroughs creations, and who knows what will happen then. The ordeals of a comic fan! This issue? Fair to boring, but I'm too depressed to go into detail. -Nige Edwards

MARVEL PRESENTS ≠6 (August)
The Guardians of the Galaxy in "The Topographical Man" by Gerber, Milgrom & Austin

I guess this strip is Marvel's way of saying "Star Trek Lives!" Now that the Badoon have been overcome, this series is moving into warp drive and really becoming galactic in scope; and just wait until you see the Topographical Man... -Allan J. Palmer

SPIDER-MAN ≠160 (September)
"My Killer, the Car" by Len Wein, Ross Andru, & Mike Esposito

Featuring the return of a villain not seen since Spider-Man ≠2! (Aside to NPE and others; told you so!) And remarkably well-handled that return is, too; in fact, the issue generally is so well-handled that I'm prepared to forgive the return of the Spider-mobile... though <u>not</u> the cameo appearances of Roy and Stan...I got tired of seeing their mugs yonks ago... -KW

INVADERS ≠7 (July) and ≠8 (September)
"The Blackout Murders of Baron Blood" and "Union Jack is Back" by Roy Thomas, Frank Robbins, and (≠7) Colletta & (≠8) Springer

Well, finally, it seems, we have a British superhero from Marvel. Granted, it's not set in the 1970s, but Union Jack, hero of World War I (it says here) has been "resurrected" for the Invaders. Roy Thomas has definitely got something good going here. In the same way that he "rationalised" Conan, scripting the series in a chronological sequence according to the "Probable Outline...", here Thomas ties in bits and pieces from the original forties comics and does what Marvel is good at--uniting several storylines. Frank Robbins' artwork is another factor which makes this title so good (am I his only British fan?), his style is just right for this book, suitably recreating the flavour of the early Timely comics.

Hopefully, we will be treated to further appearances of the Liberty Legion, and other 1940s Timely heroes as well, in the months to come. -Allan J. Palmer

TOMB OF DRACULA ≠48 (September)
"A Song For Marianne" by Marv Wolfman, Gene Colan, and Tom Palmer

What could be better than a Wolfman/Colan Dracula tale? Three of the above. Yes. But not in the same short 17 page book. Because of inflation, we regret that each review has to be decreased by-- -Richard Ashford

AVENGERS ≠151 (September)
"At Last: The Decision" by Conway, Shooter, Englehart, Perez, and Tartag!

Nostalgia freaks climb aboard, it's issue 16 come back to haunt us. Amuse yourselves by muttering "I remember that" at all the flashbacks. There's not a scrap of action, but this type of 'election' is a lot more interesting than Jimmy Carter & friends.

A fine Kirby cover, and Perez proves once more that he is <u>the</u> best group artist in comics today. Plus Wonder Man returns, to accuse the Vision of stealing his mind. Ha, nobody'll ever be able to steal my mind! Think about it. -NPE

REACTION

Send your letters to: Martin Lock.

Dear Martin,

Thank you for Bem 9 and TUKHA 1. I decline to get into a political argument with Pete Taylor, we seem to have very different views of life -- for instance, I think that radical change is very often foolhardy. Moderation in all things, I say. Let me illustrate--I believe in the principles of Women's Liberation, but the latest word from America is that only Lesbians are really Liberated (they don't need men for anything -- presumably they intend to let the race die out) and there I draw the line. Mr Taylor is obviously a Radical, and we could argue endlessly without convincing each other and bore all about us in the process. So, I restrain the temptation to start an "Oh-come-on-are-Communist-attitudes-to-sex-any-better" type of reply. "So, Edwoods would like to see more sex and violence in comics. Hulk doesn't know what sex is, but Hulk will oblige puny Edwoods with violence. Why is dumb Edwoods lying on floor screaming--?" Sorry about that, I've been reading too many of Nige's reviews. And, now, him doing it with Tarzan too. Me point out to him that Jane not really killed off. Jane come back later, with much more plausible reason than Gwen Stacy, Professor X, etc. But this after Tarzan kills 1,963 Germans in revenge.

Speaking of Women's Lib, have you realised that countless times in Bem 9 you contravened the Sex Discrimination Act? The term "heroine" should read "heroic person", and the people mentioned are given discriminatory titles. They should be Wonder Person, Superperson (not to be confused with her cousin, Superperson), three Batpersons, the Black Bereaved Spouse, and the Scarlet Person with Magical Powers. And then of the other gender, Spiderperson, Aquaperson, Lightning Young Person, and so forth.

Still, it wouldn't do if comics had to adhere too closely to our often mildly absurd laws. If they did, who would dare to sell a comic called World's Finest, featuring the Super-Sons (Super Offspring?) and Lexina Luthor, for fear of a prosecution under the Trade Descriptions Act. Luthor's daughter--before they finish, they'll haul in the offspring of the whole JLA, and then in a Marvel/DC collaboration they'll meet Franklin B. Richards, Junior Fantastic, and all his friends and--excuse me, I feel rather ill.

Kathleen Glancy.

Not me, I'm an old-time Superbaby fan! I even like the Bizarros! Gee, I thought Jane was dead--outwitted by a comic, oh I do feel like a fool... -Nige ((So what else is new? -ML))

Dear Martin,

I enjoyed Bem ≠9 so much, I had to write and tell you what I thought of it.

Firstly, I liked the idea of the extra late news section in the middle, will this be a regular feature when there is last-minute news? If Comics 101, Bemuscene, and The Highgate Six (≠8) are the sort of articles you're going to have, I hope there are going to be more; if, however, you have more like Mr Tremayne's one from ≠8, I hope they are rare.

Ed Sallis was, I thought, a bit too kind to that "certain comic-book shop". When I saw their price list, I got one hell of a shock; I would also warn your readers to give him a couple of months before he actually sends the comics (I thought that 30p for a copy of TCR was quite reasonable though). I hope that I'm talking about the right comic shop, as two were mentioned in ≠7.

You shouldn't just keep Captain Nuts, you should give him half a page in each issue; the second strip (Captain Nuts still, not Esmerelda) was interesting, even if it was an old joke--but what the heck is a "Man-Swipe"?

I enjoyed reading Kathleen Glancy's version of Tale-Enders; I would, however, like to know what the hell David Simpson meant by the term "juvenile". Most people call people in their early teens juveniles -- if this is what David meant, he has insulted a lot of people. I would be greatly surprised if 90% of people over the age of twelve didn't know a fair ammount about sex. I agree with what David said on censorship, I just don't like the way he worded it.

The U.K. Heroine Addict was great. It's a shame it is published annually, I'd like to see it at least quarterly. Your Barbarella article and the Heroine Parade were interesting, while I also enjoyed the Wasp, Misty, and Red Guardian articles more than the rest, although I don't think you ought to have said that that elf was homicidal in the Red Guardian piece, he might sue you for libel.

Nigel Balloch.

After being prematurely aged ten years due to looking at dealer's prices, I don't mind being called a juvenile. And yes, most over-twelves know what sex is...it comes after five...-Nige

Dear Martin,

Great to see Dan on the cover. Tim Rice did a programme on Capital Radio last Christmas on "The Eagle Story" including many interesting interviews. I wrote a review of it for The Panelologist, but George decided the subject was being over-exposed. Glad to see that didn't stop you from acknowledging everyone's favourite "Pilot of the Future" twice. "Peanuts" and Swamp Thing got plenty of coverage too. I think I prefer the Jeremy Rees version to the official one, which Ray Aspden summed up nicely. 3 pages of reviews seemed more than enough somehow, but maybe that's because I've almost completely stopped buying colour comics--I'll try & score STARFIRE though. I was finding it harder and harder not to be negative in my reviewing, and it got to the point where I was trying to praise mediocrity, and being non-constructive about the remainder.

My thanks for their good taste to Alex Henry and Laurence Milsted and, see what I mean, Leslie Stannage's original drawings are much better than his instant-Adams kit. How about a competition to name 10 non-Jewish SF writers? Heck! (I was going to say Giacoia but I've been told to watch my language) I was going to follow through with "an interesting mini-article" on how Giant Man/Wasp was my favourite Marvel-Age strip (inspired by Howard Stangroom (is that a name or a sound-effect)) but I don't have the time & I lost the inclination years ago. Thanks for phoning me that morning incidentally. I was still half asleep and it was a terrible line. I should've gone to Comics 101, but I didn't really know enough about it. Capital were going to cover it on the Friday "London Today", but it got edited out.

I agree with you (Martin) about the Superman & Spider-Man book. Three years ago I sent a 20-page story to Nick Landau in which Batman, the Flash, Superman & Green Lantern met Spider-Man, Thor, Captain America & the Torch, and I made Marvelville "Earth 10" (so there Gerry Conway!).

I liked the Heroine Parade, but I was sorry to see no-one chose Hawkgirl. And I agree with Howard Stangroom about the Wasp being one of the few believably human super-heroines in comics--at least he should have said that.

Lastly (perhaps), Pete April's point about forced humour is 100% correct.

"Average U.S. Supermarket computers do not a good comic-book cover make!"

Chris Ash.

No? I haven't seen any computer-drawn covers ...As you said, reviewing comics isn't easy, and it's a thankless job as half of fandom loathes comic reviews. Howard's name a sound-effect? More like an usher at a theatre, with "Sorry, no seats, Stangroom only!" -Nige

Dear Martin,

Sitting here on the evening of one of the hottest days of the year (so far!), and looking back over various pieces of correspondence, it occurs to me that I owe you a LoC on Bemusing 9 (it's amazing what a touch of the sun can drive one to, isn't it?). Anyway, in order to enhance my reputation as UK fandom's answer to Bob Rodi, the Phantom Rambler writes again...

As usual, a very nicely produced issue; how long does it take you to get those justified margins so perfect? The News section is of prime interest, but why does it have to contain such bad items as "Englehart leaves Marvel" and (horror of horrors) "Jack Kirby to draw, write and edit Jungle Action/Black Panther"? The Roy Thomas "What If" imaginary tales giant sounds a bit frightening; maybe we're finally going to get a Spidey/Conan team-up?

Page 4 funnies... great stuff, especially Captain Nuts. Reg Uspatoff and Bemuscene kept up your high standard of content; Comics 101 was interesting, and Fan-Things is an example of the sort of article I would like to see in more fanzines. No pussyfooting around--name a few names, keep fans active...please!

Some interesting comments on the censorship argument in Reaction. Kathleen Glancy's letter in particular pointed out how naive people can be with regard to such things. I endorse her observations. Incidentally, I'm pleased to see that there are a few vocal females in UK comics fandom; I hope Kathleen's letters will encourage a few more of the ladies to participate more noticeably.

The review column was surprising this time: an intelligible review of the Hulk! Mind you, instead of Nige Edwards rambling, we're treated to a column by Hunter Tremayne trying (and I repeat, trying) to say something about the Superman/Spider-Man team-up. I've read that review a half-dozen times now, but I still can't see what Hunter's trying to get over. "Two comics universes, each fantastic in subject and conception, but with one striving perpetually to rationalise the fantasy" "This comic is a journey from and to the fantastic and the sublime." "...no ideal is so sacred it cannot be bought or sold"--that's going a bit too far.

The UK Heroine Addict was quite interesting --all-in-all, another excellent issue. Finally, just so that others can criticise me, please find enclosed some comics reviews for your use, if you consider them up to standard.

Allan J. Palmer.

Allan volunteers, in his guise as "The Phantom Rambler", to discuss comics topics with anyone who wants to write to him. Brave fellow!

Hi Martin:

Thanks for the words of wisdom again. Enjoyed Bemusing, as usual, but hated Heroine Addict: pointless prose + 2nd class art. C'mon, you can do ten times better than that. If you want to do a heroine addict, forget the U.S. version, which was crap, + start from scratch. Concentrate on the interesting females, forget Supergirl + the boring ones. What's the most interesting thing about heroines? That's right, they're females, with tits and other fascinating things. Play that angle up. D'you want some advice from Sadie?

Mike Cruden.

Thanks, Mike -- but no thanks. Send her up to Bridlington to visit Nige, he's not been the same since you bounced that article of his...

Dear Martin,

Bem-9 was another masterpiece, very nice to read, with more "news" than usual; I wish you could write something about U.K. comics (e.g. the Marvel reprints) as well. The news section in Bem was never very voluminous, but this does no harm, because Bem has other qualities in the articles and features. The reviews had the right balance of content and length, while the letter column, increased from 3 to 3½ pages, was very interesting too--the only thing I can say is, don't cut down your "Reaction", keep it as it is now! And then the U.K. Heroine Addict was all we'd expect from you! This first issue was really good, especially your first article and "the Heroine Parade", while I can truly say that the other articles were also very interesting and entertaining, and all the illos were successful. I hope we will see the second U.K. Heroine Addict as soon as possible.

Bem-9 was a very good issue; if you compare it with Bem-1 you can hardly believe all the changes and differences.

Peter Badura.

And we're not stopping here, Peter! Just wait till you see what Martin's got planned for our harmonious hundredth issue! For full details, stay tuned to this fanzine! -Jonn

People,

On the morning of May 1st, I sent off for (among others) Kamandi ≠29. That afternoon, I found a copy of same, selling in a shop for 5p. I bought it, of course; what else could I do?

In between, I received Bem-9.

It was the best yet, of course, with the real highlight being on page 14. That first letter summed up perfectly my feelings on Bem, censorship in comics and Cap'n Nuts (oh yes, quantity up = quality down; please reduce the former and increase the latter)--no, seriously though, I was delighted that my letter led off Reaction. Any reason? Or just sheer chance?

Fan-Things has prompted me to order Panny ≠5 (that'll be my first!), Thing ≠21, Gleitzman ≠2, and Comic Plus ≠1--I'll say Bem sent me!

About The U.K. Heroine Addict -- others will enthuse about it. Let it simply be said that my comments are ten times more favourable than anyone else's, that I'm going to open a CHFC account at <u>once</u>, and that I want to know who that is on page 2?

Finally, thanks for publishing the dates of the August Comicon -- I will now definitely be in London from 18th to 25th August, and intend taking in <u>all</u> of the Con. Apart from anything else (Comics! Films! Comics! Posters! Comics! Discussions! Comics!), I'll be able to meet other fan writers (well, I've had letters in FU/CU and Bem, and I've sent CU articles on White Tiger and DC's war comics). It should be a real pleasure to meet people I've only read about before, people like Martin Lock, Hunter Tremayne, Alan Austin, Greg Chown, Superswipe, Nige Edwards--well, on second thoughts, maybe not that last one! Just kidding, Nige...

David A. Simpson.

PS: Anyone in Aberdeen reading this? If so, if you'd like to contact me, try ringing
I've got a large collection of comics.

Didja know that Gort, the robot in The Day The Earth Stood Still, was played by an actor called Lock Martin? Isn't that a strange coincidence, Martin? Why are you wearing that weird metal suit, Martin? Stop! No, don't! Put me down! Aaaargh!

Very amusing, David, where do you want the body sent? Well, I'll see all you people at the 2-day con or one of the others, and you can buy me a few pints while I tell you the full story of those four girls, a sheep, and our edit-- //er, Klaatu barada nikto! Which means we're out of space again, Nige--and just when my lawyer was getting interested! That was Power Girl from All Star Comics on page 2 of THA/UK, by the way Spiny, and this time the Simpson missive comes last, want to make something of it? Thank you, and good afternoon!

THE BEM STORY - SO FAR by Jim Korock

A small, 8-line plug on the back page of CMN ≠10 (Dec '73) alerted those who hadn't got to the November comic mart to the premiere issue of the new Bemusing Magazine. Perhaps, if CMN editor Burton had known that Bem would grow to be CMN's closest rival, he might have thought again. As it was, for a mere 5p (post included) you could have a copy of issue 1 in your hands. A bargain, even for those pre-inflation days!

Though it was indeed "Bem", one could be forgiven for thinking the magazine's name was "Comicon Special", as it was in bigger letters on the cover; being a xeroxed publication made the reproduction of artwork rather faint, to say the least, thus the cover repros of such comics as Avengers, Sword of Sorcery, Plop and others didn't come out so well. The type was, however, a different matter, printed same size it was nice and clear, and the words (strung together to form sentences) were very readable. Starting the mag off was what Martin has since called "a pretentious bit of editorialising", but that wasn't the case, it was basically "if you like comics, read 'em and sod anybody who knocks ya!"--how could such an editorial fail to warm the heart of any comic fan who has suffered the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, friends and parents?

The news, unfortunately, was quite downbeat -- the "death" of Warlock, and prices up from 6 to 8 pence, for example. Among the reviews, we were asked if Savage Tales ≠2 was the best comic book ever published, told that the "It, the Living Colossus" series stunk, full stop, that Master of Kung Fu seemed "a very promising new series", and how E-Man ≠1 was a lot of fun. Plus a guide to comic pricing (in those far-off pre-Austin days, remember) which made the valid moral that they "are worth what you are willing to pay, no less and no more." No truer words on the subject were ever written. Under the heading "With One Magic Word...MONEY!" one page featured comics for sale off Martin's table, Swamp Thing ≠1 at 50p and Conan ≠11 at 25p among others--don't you wish you'd been to that November mart? Other reviews and tale-enders rounded off the issue, what more could a fan want for a cover price of 2p?

Although originally scheduled for the Jan '74 mart, the second Bem didn't come out until May--but the wait had been worth it. Professional printing, and a jump from 12 up to 16 pages--but also up to 5p. With this issue, FU regular "Superswipe" contributed cover and interior illos which helped break up the near all-type format of ish 1. Conan ≠37 and Doctor Strange ≠1 were cover featured, with more inside -- some changed by the editor from 20c to

25c to tie in with the price increase (such interesting trivia, no?). More news and more reviews, and the second issue bit the dust.

Specially for the September Mart came, with 4 pages for 2p. But, despite news, reviews, and art by Supes and Greg Chown, it sold, to quote the editor, "like cold semolina".

A month later, out came Bem 3, with the page count down to 12 due to print cost increases, but this wasn't the only bad news. This was the issue in which both Jack Straw and Nige Edwards made their Bem debuts, and Bem (and fandom) would never be quite the same again. Jack contributed to the infamous "Bullpun Bulletins" page, along with artist Paul Rose and Martin, thus assuring they'll never get jobs at Marvel. Nige came up with reviews of Dracula, Spidey, Planet of the Apes, and the first in a (maybe) too long procession of Hulk reviews, and to add to Martin's problems, this was the issue in which he started the space-typing that Bem has to this very day.

In December, as a co-production between Bem and Nameless Zine, came N-Zine ≠1, duplicated and (because editor Edwards was too lazy to space-type) not as neat a production as Bem--but you did get an extra 4 pages for your 5p. There was a front cover by Superswipe, plus some nice art by Greg Chown and Ken Cropper, Tale-Enders, a mart report, more reviews, and Nige Edwards. It was good...but it wasn't Bem.

Bem 4 was out in Feb '75, though the issue number wasn't on the cover. New features were on hand, such as a "Page 4 Funny" in which Spidey met Conan (by Dave Weedon), the one-off "Insider Strikes" column, gone but certainly not forgotten by those it slagged, and Bem's

first letter column. Sex was mentioned by Nige Edwards (who else?), who put the first nail in his bad taste coffin by admitting he liked Ironjaw. Bem was starting to find a regular format, and was getting closer every time.

In April, issue 5 came out, with the page 4 funny written, coincidentally, by Pete April (with an assist from Jack Straw and with the finished art by Superswipe); liked by everyone (even Mike Cruden!) it was a good way for Pete to debut in Bem. With this issue, Bemusing had found its basic present (though still changing) format of news, page 4 funny, Reaction, Tale-Enders, reviews, and, over from Comic Fandom Bulletin to make a home in Bem, Fan-Things by Ed Sallis, undoubtably to become one of Bem's best liked features.

Like the previous issue, number 6 (June) had a front page packed with cover repros (Martin claims they help sales). As ≠5 had gone up from 5p to 10p for an extra 4 pages, ≠6 went from 16 to 20 pages and stayed at 10p, still Bem's standard size and price! Amazing what a few ads, and an increasing print run, will do, isn't it? Along with new features like "Reg Uspatoff's America" and "Captain Nuts", the readers were "treated" to a page 4 funny by Jack and Greg starring the Bem staff -- rumour has it that many readers are still not off the critical list. Gary Fox joined in with some reviews, and put in a good word for Mr Frank Robbins (no, not THAT word!), Nige again came up with an awful gag or two, and the winners of ≠5's review contest were featured in a 3-page "All Winners Squad" spread. Reading between the lines, you could see where new recruits to the review staff would come from.

No Bem for the 2-day con in August; instead, there was another N-Zine Comicon Special, back to back in its 52 pages with Nameless Zine ≠3. Better layout and an interesting discussion on comics (contributed to by me, thus making me a sort of Bem writer) made it an improvement on its first outing, and of course there were the regular Bem features like Fan-Things and the immortal Tale-Enders.

Bem ≠7 came along in October with 16 pages, of Bem proper, augmented by (or not, depending on your views) by an 8 page Weird Trash spoof of Bem called "Bamboozling Magazine". Who else but editor Jack Straw and staff Pete April, Superswipe, Nige Edwards and (fresh from doing reviews in Bems 5 and 6) Jonn Hay could have done such a deed? Having no editorial control over it, Martin could only cringe and wince as satire, sarcasm and nasty remarks were heaped upon him and Bem. Even contributors Nige and Supes got slanged! For his part in it, Edwards was made assistant editor of Bem; is there no justice? The real Bem was in the now usual format, with as a bonus the introduction on the art side of Mercy Van Vlack, but nobody will be able to forget "Bamboozling"...though they may try to, and want to!

January of this year gave us issue 8, with only 4 cover repros on the cover, along with a picture of Saturn Girl by Mercy, who was also well-represented inside, it was certainly a case of "have Mercy on me!" (which you should after a pun like that). Back to a full twenty pages again, with extra type reduction there was even more room for text and art this time, while Chris Ash, previously the joint winner of the review contest, contributed to the page 4 funnies in an artistic capacity. Rich Morrissey became a regular columnist, while Reg Uspatoff gave us the low-down on the $2.00 Superman/Spider-Man team-up; Nige filled in on Fan-Things, while, as it was a special "Fandom Team-Up" issue between Comic Fandom Bulletin and Bem, Ed filed a "Fanhunter File" before he dashed off on holiday. There was also a CFB news page, and a much-liked discussion which involved the staffs of Bem and CFB, while the issue concluded with Bem's second ever proper article, reminiscences of Conan by ex-contest reviewer Hunter Tremayne.

Latest, so far, was Bem ≠9, out in May as a double issue with 40 pages for 20p. Four extra pages were given to Bem proper, while the other 16 made up "The U.K. Heroine Addict", a co-production with the American "Comics Heroines Fan Club" devoted to such heroines as the new Red Guardian, Barbarella, the Wasp, Lois Lane, Black Angel, Saturn Girl, Misty, and a section where fans picked their favourite heroines. It was comic fandom's answer to Playboy! As to Bem, extras included an interview with Rob Barrow, a report on Comics 101 by Ruan Lanihorne, and the letters answered by Nige, quite a change from Martin's style! Tale-Enders this time closed the fanzine.

And what does that leave us with? Answer: it leaves us with 9 interesting and informative issues that have developed from that premiere xerox copy into one of fandom's most popular and consistently good fanzines. Let's hope the future gives us a lot more such issues.

Assistant editor's note:- If you'd like any Bem back issues, we have copies of Bem-1 and Summer Comics Special at 8p each, ≠3 at 10p, N-Zine ≠1 at 11p, Bems 5-8 at 14p each, and Bem-9 at 28p. Special offer--Bems 3, 6, 7 (no Weird Trash), and 8, plus SCS ≠1, only 34p! Worth it alone to avoid that Weird Trash! All prices include postage, from Martin. I wonder if the above article was indeed a history of Bem, or just a cleverly disguised back issue advertisement? -Nige.

We are proud, here at Bemusing Magazine, to be able to scoop the world by showing for the first time Marvel's newest look for Greer Grant Nelson. First she was the Cat, then Tigra the Were-Woman -- and now she's Doc Savage? Another explanation, of course, is that some absent-minded fellow at Marvel left last month's guest-star logo on the sheet when composing the new cover, and it wasn't until after sending out cover repros that somebody actually noticed the error!

ALRIGHT, INFANTINO! *
I WARNED YOU WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF I DIDN'T GET MY OWN BOOK AGAIN!
*I DREW THIS SEVERAL MONTHS AGO BUT NOW REALISE HAWK-MAN WAS UNDER THE HYPNOTIC CONTROL OF JENETTE KAHN-CHRIS
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